

“Road to Le Mans. The Film” – how Michael Fassbender's dream came true

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17/11/2023 “Road to Le Mans. The Film” is a 90-minute documentary following the path of Hollywood star Michael Fassbender from his childhood dream to the start at the world's greatest 24-hour race. On his journey with Porsche to the 100th anniversary of the endurance classic, the German-Irish actor experiences a rollercoaster of emotions – from the highest highs to the deepest lows. “Road to Le Mans. The Film” can be viewed for free from 17 November on Porsche's YouTube channel.

Michael Fassbender had dreamed of racing since childhood. Born in Heidelberg, the 46-year-old takes the first steps towards fulfilling this wish in 2018. The American actor Patrick Dempsey, who himself has tackled Le Mans three times at the wheel of a Porsche, puts him in contact with Porsche.

Supported by the Stuttgart sports car manufacturer, the Oscar-nominated film star learns how to handle the race car in the Porsche Racing Experience, the Porsche Sports Cup and ultimately the European Le Mans Series (ELMS). At these training camps, a Porsche coach is constantly at his side. Right from the start, cameras record his journey. The countless YouTube fans cheer him on in the documentary series “Road to Le Mans” and – in the case of inevitable setbacks – also sympathise with him.

“We were eager to share his motorsport journey with the world. So we created a content series around Michael’s dream from the very first second,” explains Oliver Hoffmann, Director Marketing Communications at Porsche. “It was obvious to us how big and powerful his dream is. It takes hard work to fulfil it. We supported and accompanied Michael at every step. You can feel the passion and determination in every episode of ‘Road to Le Mans’.”

Known through several blockbusters

Fassbender, famed for blockbusters such as “X-Men” and “Inglourious Basterds”, temporarily put his film career on the back burner and threw himself into the full-throttle racetrack business with gusto. “It was a breathtaking journey,” says Sebastian Borowski, Project Manager of “Road to Le Mans”. “Even though it was sometimes difficult to have a camera constantly around; no matter if the day was smooth or a disaster: Michael’s willingness to let us share his most personal moments makes the series what it is – an authentic glimpse behind the scenes on a special path to fulfilling an ultimate childhood dream.”

At one point, however, Fassbender’s dream turns into a nightmare: After three years of preparation, he finally tackled the 24 Hours of Le Mans in the Porsche 911 RSR fielded by Proton Competition in 2022 – and inadvertently became entangled in the chaos of several accidents. A brutal setback for the ambitious hobby racer. “The outcome of the race was extremely sobering for the team and especially for Michael, even though the crew managed to reach the finish line after lengthy repairs. Although he was knocked down, he got straight back up. It soon became clear that he wanted to try again,” Sebastian Borowski recalls. In addition to the racing events, the associated content series also continued to develop. “The YouTube series ‘Road to Le Mans’ captured more and more fans’ hearts and the response was sensational. The hard work, brushing off setbacks and the positive emotions after successes – it inspired people. And for all of us, the full story hadn’t yet unfolded,” said Oliver Hoffmann.

New start after setbacks

On 12 June of this year – on the 100 anniversary of the 24 Hours of Le Mans – Michael Fassbender again lined up on the grid at the Sarthe. Joining forces with works driver Richard Lietz from Austria and Martin Rump from Estonia, Fassbender performed well at the wheel of Proton Competition's No. 911 vehicle at the 24-hour classic. “The race underlined that he had made incredible progress not only in a sporting sense but also mentally,” says Sebastian Borowski.

This impressive progress became measurable: Fassbender's fastest race lap at the wheel of the ca. 378 kW (515 PS) Porsche 911 RSR was almost four seconds faster than his time from the previous year. For the first time, the 46-year-old turned a sub-four-minute lap – a critical benchmark for GT cars on the 13.626 kilometre circuit.

"He had courage, he had a big dream and he didn't let the setbacks deter him," states Oliver Hoffmann. "That's precisely what made the project so great. Luckily, we captured all the passionate moments on film from day one and can now offer the viewers around the world 'Road to Le Mans. The Film' free of charge. I hope that we encourage people to honour their personal dreams and fulfil them."

The 90-minute documentary traces Michael Fassbender and Porsche's entire motor racing journey from 2018 to 2023. The film is the culmination of the YouTube series, which has generated a cumulative 100 million views with its 33 episodes over four seasons. "Road to Le Mans. The Film" can now be seen on the channel youtube.com/@Porsche.

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